

Monitoring 21st Century Communication Tools

From smartphones and tablets to TV and social media, we live in a digital world that is connected, always on and full of content that may not be suitable for children.

As a parent, it may be difficult to keep up with the latest apps and popular digital hangouts. Have you heard of *Snapchat*, *Ask.fm*, *Kik* and *Pheed*? These are popular sites for older children and teens, but may not be for long as the landscape is constantly changing.

You may not be able to keep pace, but you can teach your child online safety by ignoring or blocking strangers. Encourage them to report inappropriate posts, pictures, or videos.



Do you know how much time your child spends on their devices? A recent study shows that the average 8- to 10-year-old spends nearly 8 hours a day with different media, while older children and teens spend more than 11 hours daily. About 75 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds own cell phones, and nearly all teens use text messaging.

Excessive usage of electronic devices has been linked to school problems, aggression, weight gain and other issues. Bullying in cyberspace is another health concern.

Help your child take a healthy approach to texting, social media, online games and other internet content by doing the following:

- **Monitor your child's online communications and media use to see what they are watching, reading, writing, sharing and doing.**
- **Teach your child how to be selective with online content and activity.**
- **Watch programs with your child and discuss family values.**
- **Make a media use plan that includes mealtime, homework and bedtime curfews for media devices. Consider removing certain electronic devices, such as cell phones, out of kids' bedrooms at night.**
- **Have your child provide you with his or her passwords.**

Keep the lines of communication open with your child about his or her internet activity, television time and use of electronic devices. Talk about it the old-fashioned way, face-to-face.



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1-800-552-7096 Virginia Child Abuse Hotline (language line available)

800-Children (800-244-5373) Parent Helpline